

TO CO-CHAIR RICK LOPES, CO-CHAIR JOSEPH P. GRESKO, AND MEMBERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: NAN ZYLA-WISENSALE, Dr.P.H.

RE: RAISED S.B. NO. 1148 & RAISED S.B. NO. 1149

DATE: MARCH 10, 2023

I would like to submit testimony in OPPOSITION to SB 1148, An Act Authorizing Certain Killing and Hunting of Black Bear and Prohibiting Bird Feeders and Other Unintentional and Intentional Feeding of Potentially Dangerous Animals.

DEEP's counting of the black bear population in Connecticut is based mainly on reported sightings, which is notoriously unscientific and unreliable. (In 2018, DEEP estimated the number of black bears as between 500 and 700.) According to DEEP's Website, "In 2021, approximately 8,600 bear SIGHTINGS from 156 of Connecticut's 169 towns were REPORTED to the DEEP Wildlife Division" (my capitalizations). It is obvious that the number of "sightings" DOES NOT INDICATE THE NUMBER OF BEARS: five people reporting seeing a bear does not equal the presence of five bears!

After being extirpated from the state by hunters, a return of the small number of bears has been managed until now and can continue to be managed by PUBLIC EDUCATION to promote PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY. For example, approaches such as removing exposed food sources, using bear-proof trash cans, cleaning barbeques, not leaving pet food outside, etc., have been successful in discouraging bears.

It is no secret that DEEP's main source of funding is through the sale of hunting and trapping licenses. Habitat loss and hunting, both legal and illegal, threaten bear populations worldwide, according to The New York Times. Without accurate population numbers, targeting a species such as black bears for killing can result in unanticipated ecological damage. An additional drawback to killing bears is the transmission of the parasitic disease trichinosis if bear meat is eaten.

In addition, I oppose Raised S.B. No. 1149, An Act Eliminating All Restrictions for Sunday Hunting on Public and Private Property. Hunting is ALREADY ALLOWED SIX DAYS A WEEK! Hunting allowed every day of the week prohibits the vast majority (98%) of taxpaying citizens of Connecticut from enjoying non-destructive recreation in nature, such as walking, hiking, birdwatching, photographing, etc., without fear of being shot by a hunter, or having the family pet shot by a hunter.